

ALLEGED NAZI OCCULT
INFLUENCE ON THE
SECOND WORLD WAR

Alleged Nazi Occult Influence on the Second World War

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First Printing, 2025

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Abstract and Introduction

This research report examines readily available information regarding the alleged influence of occult and esoteric beliefs on Nazi Germany and the Second World War. While popular culture and conspiracy theories have long suggested that mystical societies wielded significant power within the Third Reich, scholarly consensus presents a more nuanced picture. This report analyzes the historical evidence surrounding organizations such as the Thule Society and the Ahnenerbe, examines the role of völkisch nationalism and pseudoscientific racial theories, and distinguishes documented facts from post-war mythology. The findings indicate that while certain Nazi leaders, particularly Heinrich Himmler, held esoteric beliefs and patronized pseudoscientific research, these occult interests were peripheral to the core political, ideological, and military mechanisms that drove Nazi Germany's actions during World War II.

Introduction

The relationship between Nazi Germany and occultism has been the subject of intense speculation, sensationalized accounts, and serious historical inquiry

for decades. Popular culture, from novels to films, has perpetuated the image of Nazi leaders engaged in dark rituals, seeking mystical artifacts, and harnessing supernatural powers. These narratives often suggest that esoteric societies and occult practices were central to the rise and functioning of the Third Reich.

However, mainstream historical scholarship presents a considerably different picture. While acknowledging that certain elements within the Nazi movement were indeed influenced by occult and esoteric ideas, historians emphasize that these influences were largely peripheral to the core mechanisms of Nazi power and ideology. The mythology surrounding Nazi occultism often conflates several distinct phenomena: the *völkisch* nationalist movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the pseudoscientific racial theories that underpinned Nazi ideology, specific organizations like the Thule Society and Ahnenerbe, and the personal beliefs of individual Nazi leaders.

This report examines the historical evidence surrounding alleged Nazi occult influence on World War II, distinguishing between documented facts and post-war mythology, and placing these phenomena within their proper historical context.

Chapter 1

The Völkisch Movement and German Nationalism

To understand the alleged occult influences on Nazism, one must first examine the broader völkisch movement that emerged in Germany and Austria during the late 19th century. The term "völkisch" derives from "Volk," meaning people or nation, and represented a form of ethnic nationalism that emphasized German racial and cultural purity.

The völkisch movement was characterized by several key features:

Romantic Nationalism: A romanticized view of Germanic history, mythology, and folk traditions, often drawing on pre-Christian pagan imagery and medieval legends.

Racial Mysticism: The belief in an ancient Aryan race of superior beings, whose bloodline and spiritual essence needed to be preserved and purified.

Anti-Modernism: Rejection of industrialization, urbanization, and Enlightenment rationalism in favor of a return to an idealized agrarian Germanic past.

Antisemitism: Jews were portrayed as racial and spiritual enemies of the Aryan people, blamed for Germany's problems and perceived cultural degeneration.

Esoteric Influences: Some *völkisch* thinkers incorporated elements from Theosophy, Ariosophy, and other esoteric traditions, creating syncretic belief systems that blended nationalism with mysticism.

Heinrich Himmler, as documented by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, was deeply influenced by *völkisch* literature during his university years in Munich in the early 1920s. His speeches emphasized "race consciousness," the cult of the German race, German expansion, and the struggle against eternal enemies including "Jewish capital," Marxism, liberal democracy, and Slavic peoples.

The *völkisch* movement provided a cultural and ideological substrate from which Nazism drew certain symbols, rhetoric, and themes. However, it is crucial to distinguish between the diffuse cultural influence of *völkisch* nationalism and the specific claim that occult societies directly controlled or significantly influenced Nazi policy and military strategy.

Chapter 2

The Thule Society: Myth and Reality

The Thule Society (Thule-Gesellschaft) is perhaps the most frequently cited organization when discussing alleged Nazi occult connections. Founded in Munich in 1918 by Rudolf von Sebottendorff, the society took its name from the mythical northern land of Thule, believed by some to be the original homeland of the Aryan race.

HISTORICAL FACTS ABOUT THE THULE SOCIETY

The Thule Society was indeed a real organization with documented connections to early Nazi figures. Its activities included:

Völkisch Ideology: The society promoted extreme German nationalism, antisemitism, and belief in Aryan racial superiority.

Political Activism: Members were actively opposed to the Communist uprising in Bavaria following World War I and supported right-wing political movements.

Early Nazi Connections: Several individuals who later became prominent Nazis had contact with the Thule Society, including Rudolf Hess, Alfred Rosenberg, and Dietrich Eckart (who became an important early mentor to Adolf Hitler).

Occult Interests: The society incorporated elements of Germanic paganism, rune symbolism, and some esoteric teachings, though the extent and seriousness of these practices varied among members.

SEPARATING FACT FROM FICTION

Despite these connections, historical evidence does not support claims that the Thule Society directly controlled the Nazi Party or wielded significant influence over Nazi Germany. Key points of clarification include:

Timing: The Thule Society was most active between 1918 and the early 1920s, predating the consolidation of Nazi power. By the time the Nazis came to power in 1933, the society had largely ceased functioning as an organized entity.

Hitler's Relationship: There is no credible evidence that Adolf Hitler was ever a member of the Thule Society or that he took direction from it. While Hitler knew

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some individuals associated with the society, he was often dismissive of mysticism and occult practices.

Limited Scope: The society was primarily a political discussion group and social club for right-wing nationalists rather than a powerful occult organization wielding supernatural powers or secret knowledge.

Post-War Exaggeration: Many sensationalized accounts of the Thule Society's influence emerged after World War II, often mixing historical facts with fictional embellishments.

Historical scholarship indicates that while the Thule Society represented an early meeting point for some völkisch nationalists who would later join the Nazi movement, it did not serve as the occult puppet master of the Third Reich as popular mythology suggests.

Chapter 3

The Ahnenerbe

Pseudoscience in Service of Ideology

Unlike the Thule Society, the Ahnenerbe (full name: Studiengesellschaft für Geistesurgeschichte, Deutsches Ahnenerbe, or "Study Society for Primordial Intellectual History, German Ancestral Heritage") was an official organization of the SS that operated during the Nazi period and did receive state support.

STRUCTURE AND PURPOSE

Founded in 1935 by Heinrich Himmler, Herman Wirth, and Richard Walther Darré, the Ahnenerbe was established to research the archaeological and cultural history of the Aryan race. The organization's stated goals included:

Archaeological Research: Conducting excavations and studies to prove the superiority and ancient origins of the Germanic peoples.

Anthropological Studies: Measuring and classifying human populations according to Nazi racial theories.

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Cultural Documentation: Recording Germanic folklore, traditions, and symbols to construct a mythologized Aryan past.

Expeditions: Sponsoring research expeditions to locations believed to hold evidence of ancient Aryan civilizations, including Tibet, South America, and the Middle East.

ACTIVITIES AND OPERATIONS

The Ahnenerbe engaged in various activities that blended legitimate scholarship with pseudoscientific racial ideology:

Academic Facade: The organization employed trained archaeologists, historians, and anthropologists, giving its work an veneer of scholarly respectability.

Ideological Mission: All research was conducted with the predetermined goal of validating Nazi racial theories and the myth of Aryan superiority.

Publication: The Ahnenerbe published journals and books presenting its findings as scientific fact.

Criminal Activities: During the war, some Ahnenerbe researchers participated in or facilitated war crimes, including medical experiments on concentration camp prisoners.

THE OCCULT QUESTION

While the Ahnenerbe's research often touched on mythology, ancient symbols, and pre-Christian Germanic traditions, characterizing it primarily as an "oc-

cult organization" obscures its more dangerous function as a pseudo-academic institution designed to provide intellectual justification for genocide.

The organization's work was less about practicing magic or seeking supernatural powers and more about manufacturing historical and scientific legitimacy for Nazi racial ideology. The focus on runes, ancient legends, and mystical symbols served propagandistic and identity-building purposes rather than occult ones in the traditional sense.

Chapter 4

Heinrich Himmler: The True Believer

If any major Nazi leader could be said to have genuinely held occult and esoteric beliefs, it was Heinrich Himmler, Reichsführer of the SS. Historical documentation reveals that Himmler's worldview incorporated elements that might be characterized as mystical or occult:

HIMMLER'S ESOTERIC INTERESTS

Racial Mysticism: Himmler believed in a mystical connection between blood, soil, and Germanic spiritual essence. He viewed the SS not merely as a military or police organization but as a racial-spiritual elite.

Reincarnation: Himmler apparently believed in reincarnation and reportedly thought he was the reincarna-

tion of Heinrich I (Henry the Fowler), a 10th-century German king.

Symbolism and Ritual: Himmler incorporated runic symbols, neo-pagan ceremonies, and ritual elements into SS culture, including special ceremonies at Wewelsburg Castle, which he envisioned as a spiritual center for the SS.

Astrology and Alternative Medicine: Himmler showed interest in astrology, homeopathy, and various alternative healing practices.

The Ahnenerbe: As discussed above, Himmler founded and patronized the Ahnenerbe to pursue research that blended archaeology with racial mysticism.

LIMITS OF INFLUENCE

However, several important caveats must be noted:

Personal vs. Institutional: Himmler's personal beliefs, however unusual, did not necessarily translate into widespread occult practice throughout the Nazi regime or the SS.

Hitler's Views: Adolf Hitler himself was generally dismissive of mysticism and occultism. While he utilized mythology and symbolism for propagandistic purposes, he was more influenced by Social Darwinism, nationalism, and political opportunism than by esoteric philosophy.

Practical Power: Himmler's actual power derived from his control of the SS, the Gestapo, and the con-

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centration camp system, not from any alleged occult abilities.

Instrumentalization: Even Himmler's occult interests often served practical purposes such as building SS identity, legitimizing racial ideology, or providing justification for territorial expansion.

The role of occultism in Himmler's thinking demonstrates that esoteric beliefs existed within the Nazi leadership, but these beliefs were intertwined with and subordinate to the regime's core political, racial, and military objectives.

Chapter 5

Nazi Ideology: Racism, Not Mysticism

At the core of Nazi ideology was not occultism but a pseudo-scientific racial theory combined with extreme nationalism, antisemitism, and authoritarianism. The primary intellectual foundations of Nazism included:

Social Darwinism: The belief that human society was governed by survival of the fittest, with races competing for dominance.

Scientific Racism: Attempts to use anthropology, biology, and medicine to classify and rank human populations, with Aryans at the top and Jews at the bottom.

Lebensraum (Living Space): The geopolitical theory that Germany needed to expand eastward to acquire territory for its growing population.

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Antisemitism: Deep-seated hatred of Jews, blamed for Germany's defeat in World War I, economic problems, and cultural "degeneration."

Führerprinzip (Leader Principle): Absolute authority vested in Hitler as the embodiment of the national will.

These ideological foundations were far more influential in shaping Nazi policy and military strategy than any occult beliefs. The Holocaust, the invasion of the Soviet Union, and other catastrophic Nazi actions were driven by racial ideology, geopolitical ambition, and totalitarian control, not by mystical visions or occult practices.

Chapter 6

The Role of Christianity in Nazi Germany

An important but often overlooked aspect of the religious landscape in Nazi Germany was the relationship between the regime and Christian churches. According to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Germany in 1933 was an overwhelmingly Christian nation:

Demographics: Approximately 60 million Germans were Christian, with about 40 million Protestants and 20 million Catholics. The Jewish population was less than 1 percent.

Church Response: Most Christian leaders and laity initially welcomed or at least accepted the Nazi regime, influenced by nationalism, anti-Communism, and resentment over World War I.

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"Positive Christianity": The Nazi Party platform included a statement supporting "positive Christianity," which many Christians interpreted favorably despite its linkage of confessional freedom to racialized nationalism.

Church Struggles: Within Protestantism, a conflict emerged between the pro-Nazi "German Christians" movement and the opposing "Confessing Church." The Catholic Church initially showed more suspicion but eventually signed a Concordat with the Nazi government in 1933.

Limited Resistance: While individual clergy members like Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Martin Niemöller opposed the regime, church leadership generally pursued caution and compromise. There was virtually no public opposition to antisemitism from church leaders.

This Christian context is crucial because it demonstrates that the religious landscape of Nazi Germany was dominated not by occult sects but by mainstream Christianity, which largely failed to resist Nazi ideology and actions. The emphasis on alleged Nazi occultism can sometimes obscure the uncomfortable historical reality of widespread Christian complicity or silence during the Holocaust.

Chapter 7

Secret Weapons and Occult Technology

Debunking Myths

Among the most persistent myths about Nazi occultism are claims that the regime developed advanced technology through occult knowledge or extraterrestrial contact. These stories often involve:

Vril Energy: Based on a concept from Edward Bulwer-Lytton's 1871 novel "The Coming Race," some conspiracy theories claim the Nazis harnessed a mysterious energy called "Vril" to power advanced weapons or flying saucers.

Nazi UFOs: Allegations that the Third Reich developed anti-gravity aircraft or "flying discs" based on occult knowledge or alien technology.

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Wonder Weapons: Exaggerated or entirely fictional accounts of Nazi "wonder weapons" (Wunderwaffen) with supernatural origins.

HISTORICAL REALITY

The historical evidence thoroughly debunks these claims:

No Physical Evidence: Despite decades of investigation, no credible physical evidence of Vril-powered devices, Nazi UFOs, or occult technology has ever been found.

Actual Nazi Technology: The Nazis did develop advanced conventional weapons including the V-1 and V-2 rockets, jet aircraft, and various experimental weapons. These were products of German engineering and science, not occultism.

Post-War Origins: Most "Nazi occult technology" stories emerged after the war, often in science fiction, sensationalist books, and conspiracy theories rather than in historical documentation.

Misinterpretation: Some accounts conflate actual Nazi interest in unconventional weapons research with fictional occult technology.

The persistence of these myths likely stems from several factors: the desire to find extraordinary explanations for Nazi evil, Cold War anxieties about secret weapons, and the enduring appeal of combining historical events with science fiction elements.

Chapter 8

The Vril Society: Fiction Presented as Fact

The Vril Society (Vril-Gesellschaft) is often mentioned alongside the Thule Society in discussions of Nazi occultism. However, the historical evidence for its existence is extremely thin.

THE VRIL CONCEPT

The term "Vril" originates from Edward Bulwer-Lytton's 1871 science fiction novel "The Coming Race," in which it describes a form of energy controlled by an advanced subterranean civilization. Some occult groups in the late 19th and early 20th centuries adopted this fictional concept.

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HISTORICAL EVIDENCE

Despite numerous claims, there is little credible historical evidence that a "Vril Society" actually existed as an organized entity in Nazi Germany:

Lack of Documentation: Unlike the Thule Society or Ahnenerbe, which have documented histories, membership lists, and archival records, there is virtually no contemporary documentation of a Vril Society during the Nazi period.

Post-War Invention: Most references to a Nazi-era Vril Society appear in post-war publications, particularly beginning in the 1960s and 1970s, rather than in wartime documents.

Confusion with Other Groups: Some accounts may conflate references to other esoteric societies or misinterpret völkisch interest in mythology and symbolism.

Sensationalism: The Vril Society has become a staple of conspiracy theories and pseudo-historical accounts, often presented without credible sources.

Mainstream historians generally consider the Vril Society as described in popular accounts to be either fictional or a gross exaggeration of minor esoteric groups that had no significant influence on Nazi Germany.

Chapter 9

Academic Perspectives on Nazi Occultism

Serious historical scholarship on Nazism and occultism has produced several important works that attempt to separate fact from fiction:

KEY SCHOLARLY FINDINGS

Peripheral Influence: While acknowledging that some Nazi figures had esoteric interests, historians emphasize that these were peripheral to the core political and ideological mechanisms of Nazi power.

Völkisch Context: Occult and esoteric elements in Nazism are better understood as part of the broader völkisch nationalist movement rather than as evidence of secret societies controlling the regime.

Individual Variation: Interest in occultism varied greatly among Nazi leaders. Hitler was generally dismis-

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sive, Himmler was genuinely interested, and most others showed little concern.

Instrumentalization: Even when Nazi leaders engaged with occult or mystical ideas, they often instrumentalized them for practical political purposes rather than believing in or practicing them seriously.

Post-War Mythology: Much of what is popularly believed about Nazi occultism stems from post-war sensationalism, fiction, and conspiracy theories rather than wartime evidence.

IMPORTANT HISTORICAL WORKS

Scholars who have addressed this topic include:

Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke: His book "The Occult Roots of Nazism" examines the relationship between Ariosophy and early Nazi ideology while also debunking many sensationalized claims.

Michael Kater: Researched the Ahnenerbe and other Nazi cultural organizations.

Doris Bergen: Studied the "German Christians" movement and twisted interpretations of Christianity under Nazism.

Robert Eriksen: Examined the complicity of churches and universities in Nazi Germany.

These scholars provide nuanced analyses that acknowledge the presence of esoteric elements in Nazi culture while rejecting the notion that occultism was a primary driver of Nazi policy or military strategy.

Chapter 10

Why the Myths Persist

Psychological and Cultural Factors

The persistence of exaggerated or false claims about Nazi occultism, despite historical evidence to the contrary, raises interesting questions about why these myths endure:

EXPLANATORY NARRATIVES

Extraordinary Evil, Extraordinary Explanations: The unprecedented horror of the Holocaust and Nazi atrocities may seem to demand extraordinary explanations. Occult influence provides a dramatic narrative that makes sense of incomprehensible evil.

Externalization: Attributing Nazi evil to dark mystical forces can psychologically distance it from "normal" human motivations like prejudice, nationalism, and authoritarianism, which are more disturbing because they are more commonplace.

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CULTURAL APPEAL

Entertainment Value: Stories of Nazi occultism are inherently dramatic and have provided rich material for novels, films, and video games.

Mystery and Intrigue: Occult narratives offer mystery, secret knowledge, and hidden history, which are more engaging than complex political and social explanations.

Conspiracy Thinking: Nazi occultism fits into broader conspiracy theory frameworks that see history as driven by secret societies rather than visible political and economic forces.

HISTORICAL ANXIETY

Cold War Context: During the Cold War, anxieties about secret weapons and hidden Nazi technology contributed to the proliferation of these stories.

Modern Relevance: In contemporary times, Nazi occultism narratives sometimes serve as allegories for concerns about the dangers of irrationalism, pseudoscience, or extremist ideology.

Understanding why these myths persist is important for historians and educators who must continually work to correct misconceptions and promote evidence-based understanding of this critical period in history.

Chapter 11

Conclusion and References

Conclusion

This research report has examined the alleged influence of occult and esoteric beliefs on Nazi Germany and the Second World War, analyzing available historical evidence and distinguishing documented facts from post-war mythology.

The findings indicate that while occult and esoteric elements were indeed present in Nazi Germany, their influence has been greatly exaggerated in popular culture and conspiracy theories. The historical reality includes:

Völkisch Foundations: Nazi ideology drew on the völkisch nationalist movement, which incorporated romantic nationalism, racial mysticism, and some esoteric elements, but this represented a cultural influence rather than direct occult control.

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The Thule Society: While a real organization with connections to early Nazi figures, the Thule Society was primarily a right-wing political group active in the early 1920s, not the occult puppet master of the Third Reich.

The Ahnenerbe: This SS organization did conduct pseudoscientific research blending archaeology with racial ideology, but it functioned more as a propaganda tool than a genuine occult society.

Heinrich Himmler: The Reichsführer-SS genuinely held esoteric beliefs and patronized mystical research, but his actual power derived from control of police and military apparatus, not occult practices.

Nazi Ideology: The core of Nazi ideology was pseudo-scientific racism, extreme nationalism, anti-semitism, and authoritarianism, not mysticism or occultism.

Christian Context: Nazi Germany was an overwhelmingly Christian nation, and the relationship between the regime and mainstream churches was far more significant than any alleged occult influences.

Technological Myths: Claims of Nazi occult technology, Vril-powered weapons, or UFOs have no credible historical evidence and represent post-war fiction.

The emphasis on alleged Nazi occultism can be problematic for several reasons. It can obscure the actual historical mechanisms of Nazi power, which were based on conventional politics, bureaucracy, propaganda, and military force. It can also distract from un-

comfortable truths about widespread complicity, including the failure of Christian churches and ordinary citizens to resist the regime.

Understanding the limited and peripheral role of occultism in Nazi Germany is important for accurate historical comprehension. The Holocaust and World War II resulted from human choices driven by prejudice, nationalism, economic anxiety, political opportunism, and moral failure, not from supernatural forces or secret mystical societies. Recognizing this fact makes the history more, not less, disturbing because it demonstrates that such atrocities can arise from all-too-human motivations.

For contemporary society, the lessons are clear: defending against totalitarianism and genocide requires vigilance against prejudice, critical thinking about pseudoscience and propaganda, protection of democratic institutions, and moral courage to resist injustice. These are practical, human responsibilities that cannot be externalized to occult forces or secret societies.

Sometimes, more often than we care to admit, the real monsters are very human. Secrets are out there, some that humanity may never know the full truth of, but the facts still remain that many atrocities of the Nazi regime were committed with evidence of those very cycles repeating in the modern day. One has to wonder, could allowing these conspiracy theories to prosper be a method of self-sabotage to distract anyone who dares to look from the truth?

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